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American Pilot Gives Rare View of Saudi-U.S. Relationship

WASHINGTON [November 10, 2009] – Captain Joseph Grant, a U.S. World War II pilot, will be in the Washington, DC area this week for the national book launch of “King Abdulaziz...His Plane and His Pilot,” by Michael Saba. Captain Grant will provide a rare first-hand account of the history and the beginning of the diplomatic Saudi-U.S. relationship as the first pilot to King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al-Saud, the founder of the third Saudi state, in 1945.

Captain Grant, who is 101 years-old, flew a Douglas-DC3 aircraft to Saudi Arabia to be delivered as a gift to King Abdulaziz from President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, following the leader’s historic meeting aboard the U.S.S. Quincy on February 14, 1945. Subsequently, he served two years in the Kingdom as the first airline pilot to King Abdulaziz. Captain Grant was also instrumental in the establishment of Saudi Arabia’s first national airline and the training of its pilots.

On November 12, Captain Grant and author Dr. Saba will be at the Glenn L. Martin Maryland Aviation Museum in Baltimore, MD from 12:00pm into the afternoon, and at the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum in Washington DC on November 14, from 1:00pm – 3:00pm.

Saudi Ambassador to the U.S. Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir expressed appreciation to Captain Grant saying, “Captain Grant’s efforts to help develop aviation in Saudi Arabia and to unite our two countries under a mutual interest still resonate today and we will forever be grateful.”

On January 28, 2009, Captain Grant was presented with the King Abdulaziz Medal, which is awarded in recognition of significant contributions made by an individual to the Kingdom. In addition, on March 22, 2007, Captain Grant was presented with the Friends of Saudi Arabia’s Hart Award. This award is named for Ambassador Parker T. Hart who opened the first U.S. Consulate in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia over 60 years ago and served as Ambassador to Saudi Arabia from 1961-1965.

For more information on Saudi-U.S. relations, please visit www.saudiembassy.net.

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SAUDI ARABIA | IN FOCUS

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SAUDI ARABIA

New Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs appointed

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz on November 2 appointed Prince Dr. Mansour bin Mit'eb bin Abdulaziz as the new Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs. Prince Mansour replaced Prince Mit'eb bin Abdulaziz, whose resignation was accepted earlier by King Abdullah.

King approves Program of Human Rights Culture Promotion

King Abdullah has approved the Program of Human Rights Culture Promotion. In a November 1 statement, Dr. Bandar Al-Eiban, Chairman of the Human Rights Commission, expressed his appreciation for the King's support. "The promotion of the culture of human rights is a clear example of confirmation of the King's policy for human rights care, protection and preservation to enable citizens and residents to enjoy prosperous lives in which human values flourish," he said.

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FOREIGN RELATIONS

Foreign Minister meets with Secretary of State Clinton

Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal met November 2 with U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in Marrakech, Morocco. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral and regional issues. The meeting was also attended by Saudi Ambassador to the U.S. Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir.

GCC Interior Ministers hold 28th meeting

Deputy Minister of Interior Prince Ahmad bin Abdulaziz led the Saudi delegation to the 28th Meeting of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Interior Ministers held in Muscat, Oman, October 27. The participants focused on issues affecting regional security including terrorism, drug smuggling, money laundering, piracy and intelligence sharing.

Prince Ahmad said regional stability requires coordination between all the Gulf countries based on the principles of mutual respect, joint cooperation and non-intervention in domestic affairs and called for coordinated Gulf and international efforts to confront challenges and dangers facing the region, including terrorism.

The Interior Ministers adopted a proposal to crystallize a joint approach to counterterrorism. Furthermore, they emphasized the importance of maintaining the security, territorial integrity and independence of both Iraq and Yemen.

FOREIGN AID

Kingdom airlifts aid to Burkina Faso and the Philippines

In continuation of its humanitarian airlift to Burkina Faso, which was recently hit by torrential rainfall, a second Saudi relief plane arrived in Ouagadougou on October 26. The plane was carrying 85 tons of relief supplies. King Abdullah has ordered that 180 tons of aid be airlifted to country.

On November 1, the Kingdom began another humanitarian aid airlift, carrying emergency supplies to hurricane victims in the northern Philippines. A Saudi relief plane arrived at the Manila Airport on November 1 and November 2. Each plane was loaded with 100 tons of blankets, tents, and foodstuffs.

TERRORISM

Arms cache seized

Saudi security forces seized an arms cache near Riyadh linked to an Al-Qaeda cell dismantled in August, the Interior Ministry reported on November 1. Interior Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Mansour Al-Turki said the weapons were found buried in a vacant house north of Riyadh, after interrogations of 44 people linked to Al-Qaeda, whose arrests were announced on August 19. Maj. Gen. Al-Turki said the authorities are searching for the owners of the house. The arms haul included 281 Kalashnikov assault rifles, 250 magazines and 41,250 rounds of ammunition, the spokesman said.



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